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ABSTRACT

The history of the founding and first five years of operation of Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona is presented in this paper. Following a brief description of the entire college program, philosophy, and physical plant, the reading program is discussed. The reading area is an independent academic area within the general studies division. Enrollment in a reading course is voluntary, and credit obtained is applicable toward the A.A. degree. The Alternative Learning Center (ALC) is an offspring of the reading program and provides individualized instruction in various subject areas. Designed to supply alternative methods of learning, the center uses individualized, modular, multimedia, and personal methods to aid learning and can be used to obtain tutoring and supplemental help for classes. The ALC may provide complete course work in some areas, with students allowed to work through subjects at their own pace. The ALC offers instruction in writing, math, reading, English as a second language, and study skills. Counseling services also are provided. (TO)

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THE PARENT READING CENTER

&

ITS OFFSPRING:

THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER

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FOR

IRA Southwest Regional Meeting

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P I M A C O L L E G E

HISTORY

Various groups and many people in education began informal, favorable discussions about a junior college in 1963. A 1964 report also showed that Pima County was paying $100,000 tuition that year for some 250 residents attending junior colleges elsewhere.

A 1966 survey by the Planning and Development committee showed:

(a) that 20 per cent of the 1961 and 1963 high school graduates in Pima County would take advantage of a two-year course, or of post-high school vocational training if it were available. Another 20 per cent might take advantage of such training. Among men who had not gone on to college, 64 per cent said they definitely would take advantage of such opportunity.

(b) that employers indicated dissatisfaction with existing job-training facilities. They felt high school was not enough, but for many, college was either too much or inappropriate.

(b) that parents planned to send their children to junior colleges after they completed high school, thereby raising tuition costs for the county.

The college opened to 3,728 students in September, 1970, with most facilities housed in temporary quarters and a portion located at a partially completed campus. All college programs were moved to a 273-acre campus site on West Anklam Road in January, 1971.

In order to meet rapidly growing enrollments, a downtown Tucson campus was opened in September, 1974, and plans are being made to establish a satellite campus at a southeast side site after 1975.

College enrollments, by the spring of 1974, reached 12,176 students, and it is anticipated the number will grow to 14,100 in the fall of 1974 with 8,083 on the west campus, 2,041 at the downtown satellite campus and the remainder in off-campus classes.

THE DON SYSTEM

The Don System, which never fully materialized, had been proposed by former PCC President Dr. Oliver Laine in 1968. Dr. Laine had proposed the concept, designed after one used at Oxford University, as a means of reducing college drop-out rates.

Instructors, under the concept, were to serve as dons, providing for a close counselor-student relationship. The don would be the student's friend, serving as his social model as well as his tutor. Each don would be assigned four groups of eight students whose course of study was similar.

The concept was abandoned by Dr. Kenneth Harper, PCC's second President, as being too experimental.

ADMINISTRATION

PCC's first President was Dr. Oliver H. Laine, serving from December, 1967, through June, 1969. President of Pima at the time of the college's opening in the fall of 1970 was Dr. Kenneth E. Harper. He was President from June, 1969, through June, 1972. Currently serving as President is Dr. Irwin L. Spector. He assumed the position in July of 1972.

DIVISION CENTERS

The educational program is divided into six major divisions and the Downtown Campus which currently operates as a single division. The six educational divisions on the West Campus are:

1. Business
2. Fine and Applied Arts
3. General Studies
4. Health Sciences
5. Human Resources
6. Math, Science, and Electronics.

A division director is in charge of each division.

The District does not separate technical-vocational programs from academic programs. Rather, the so-called academic and occupational offerings are found within the appropriate division.

PIMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PHILOSOPHY

The proper functioning of a democratic society and the well-being of the individual depend on his opportunity to develop his abilities in accordance with his own chosen goals. To achieve this end, Pima Community College believes education should be designed as a continuous process which develops a man's awareness both of himself and his environment and thus, prepares him to function more effectively in a highly complex society.

Each individual in the college community is encouraged to take pride in his own heritage and, at the same time, to develop awareness and appreciation of differences which stem from differing backgrounds.

An institution committed to these ends attempts to create an atmosphere rich in a diversity of subject matter, materials and educational approaches. In accepting the principle of continuous and open evaluation of all activities, the college encourages all participants to make free, intelligent and responsible choices from a wide range of alternatives.

THE BEGINNING

A huge hangar--218,480 square feet--at Tucson's International Airport became the college's temporary home during the fall of 1970, when classes first opened, as a series of strikes caused construction delays at the new Anklam Road campus. A few classes were conducted in the four completed campus buildings, but most classes and all administration offices were housed in the hangar which from 1948 to 1963 served as the main airlines terminal. Use of the hangar over trailers and School District 1 facilities was determined on the basis of being the most economical and feasible. Staff and students did, however, experience some discomforts such as poor cooling during the summer and poor heating

during the winter. Classes and business activities also had to come to a complete halt at times with the take-off and landings of National Guard jets near the hangar facilities.

The reading area, at the hangar, had one classroom in which classes were in session from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The classes on the west campus were taught in a large room, with no dividers, while other classes were also in session.

All campus buildings, with the exception of the College Center and gymnasium, were completed in time for spring semester classes and a move from the hangar was made at the end of December, 1970. As the college could not, at this point, afford to hire professional movers, all of the college's personnel volunteered to pitch in with the move by using personal and rented vehicles.

At the campus, in keeping with the philosophy of openness, classes were held in two-sided classrooms with the open third and fourth sides serving as hallways and/or entryways. The openness of class areas was not conducive to learning since language classes were taught in areas adjacent to reading areas. At the end of the second semester, it was realized that this type of openness would not work, so during the summer, walls were constructed and doors were installed.

The reading area had two centers which were part of an octagonal plan clustered around a central core area. This core, which for one year served as the office for the reading/ESL faculty, is currently used by reading/ESL as a materials and supplies area.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Reading area functions in an independent, academic area within the General Studies division and its "status" is that of any other subject area.

The catalog description has been revised from the traditional course descriptions to a more general statement which has helped students avoid the confusion about which reading course to select.

REA 100 Reading Improvement/4 cr. hrs/4 periods

All students should register for REA 100 series which is composed of three levels. Level placement for each student is determined by diagnostic testing and teacher evaluation after enrollment. Classes meet four hours a week but special schedules can be arranged for students who would otherwise have a class conflict. Non-native speakers of English should see English as a Second Language. Group and individual instruction emphasizes vocabulary, comprehension, study skills and reading speed in each of the three levels which are: REA 100--Reading Improvement; REA 101--Developmental Reading; REA 102--Critical Reading. (formerly REA 60 series)

The four hours of credit are applicable toward the A.A. degree, and the courses are generally accepted at other community colleges. At present, transfer ability is being sought; however, since there are no parallel courses at the state universities, this transferability has not been fully established.

Enrollment in a reading course is voluntary. There are no required reading classes -- no entrance tests which force students into classes.

The classes operate on an academic basis with an enrollment of 20, an increase of 5 from the first year. Each class meets 4 hours per week for 4 units of credit. Classes start at 7:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. on a 4-day per week basis. Late afternoon classes were originally scheduled at 2:00 p.m. and at 3:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday; however, these classes frequently did not fill. By changing to a 2:00-4:00 p.m. two-day-a-week pattern, these classes also filled. All evening classes operate on a 2-hour (5:10-7:00 and 7:10-9:00) twice a week pattern.

The Reading Centers are "open" from 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday and from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. on Friday for student use. An honor system of sign-ins is used for the Center, and instructors are on duty Friday morning to give help if needed.

Within the course design there are three levels of reading -- improvement, developmental, critical -- which form the core offerings. Through an in-area sub-division of these three levels, students can obtain aid at a level of need.

All students are given the Nelson-Denny test, Form A for placement, which is generally based on the comprehension score. Form B is used as the post test.

The area has approved the following nimimum requirements:

Minimum Standards
Adopted January 1975

Minimum Requirements for Reading 100 Series:

1. 25 to 100 controlled readings (number determined by instructor)
2. Completion of the assigned text

Options:

In addition to area requirements, individual instructors may assign work as they see a need. This work could include:

1. Various Kits
2. Outside timed readings or eye exercises
3. Tach-X or Flash X
4. Tapes
5. Study skill application
6. Efficiency checks
7. Teacher materials
8. Vocabulary Development books (Context Clues)
9. Spelling 1500 Units
10. Reading for Understanding

Upon opening, Reading had five controlled readers on the two campuses, a limited number of filmstrips, and a Tach-X. Over the years, the equipment has grown to include 35 controlled readers, 2 sets of filmstrips from AA through MN, tape recorders, and 3 skimmers.

PERSONNEL

The area consists of (1) a combination instructor/coordinator, (2) full-time faculty and (3) associate (part-time) faculty. The original five full-time faculty was increased to six. Associate faculty vary from five to eight as needed. The total teaching staff in Reading varies between eleven to fourteen faculty.

The faculty load per week is currently 16 credit hours (4 classes at 4 credit hours). Originally the faculty load was 14.8 (4 classes at 3.7 credit hours).

Besides teaching 16 hours a week, the faculty is involved with students--having individual conferences, tutoring, calling those who are absent, re-arranging schedules, etc. A great amount of public relations work is done for other areas of the college (giving demonstrations to classes, doing readability checks on textbooks, explaining the reading program to both faculty and students). All of these activities are performed at the request of the specific group involved.

Since 1969, the faculty attitude has been one of seeking perfection. They wanted variable credit but have not been successful. They wanted open enrollment, and, in this, have been successful in that a student may enroll in classes even on the last day. There is constant development in the area as work continues toward an ideal reading program for Pima Community College.

THE "OFF-SPRING"

In striving for the "ideal" the area has sought expansion, and it is through the Alternative Learning Center that this goal has been partially achieved.

Alternative Learning Center

The Alternative Learning Center provides individualized instruction in various subject areas. Designed to supply alternative methods of learning, the center uses individualized, modular, multi-media and personal methods to aid learning. The center can be used to obtain tutoring and supplemental help for classes or

may provide complete course work in some areas. Students are allowed to work through subjects at their own pace.

The center, located on the first floor of Buildings F and G, offers instruction in writing, math, reading, English as a second language, and study skills. Counseling services also are provided.

The ALC is the result of a grant, received Spring 1973, for the purpose of establishing a center which provides alternative methods of learning in writing, math, reading, ESL, and study skills.

Upon receipt of the grant, a faculty committee began:

(1) interviewing candidates for the position of ALC director.

(2) searching for and interviewing personnel for the para-professional positions.

(3) establishing some of the structure, such as course content, etc.

(4) researching and ordering a wide range and variety of materials and/or equipment which would aid in offering alternatives to already established courses.

During the course of these activities, the committee also researched and/or visited other learning centers. As a result of these visits, and of the later trips of the ALC director, it was learned that Pima was planning to start at a point which many other schools hoped to reach after further operation.

In the Fall'73, emphasis was given to the preparation of skill modules which are to be offered as variable credit courses. The modules developed are:

(1) Study Skills
(2) Comprehension Skills
(3) Phonetic Skills
(4) Spelling
(5) Vocabulary

Currently, module development is continuing on:

(1) speed reading
(2) content area reading

At the end of Fall 1973, two para-professionals were employed in order to continue preparatory work and to open the center on a limited referral basis in Spring 1974.

The limited operation was necessary since the materials and/or equipment had not arrived, and since the modules had not been duplicated. The Spring '74 operation also functioned primarily as a supplement to the existing reading classes, although some work was done with referrals from various city agencies.

During the Fall 1974, the ALC has continued to supplement reading courses but more students on a walk-in basis are beginning to utilize the services available.

In addition to providing alternative methods of learning supervised by para-professionals, the center provides tutoring help. The tutors are trained in reading by the para-professionals.

Although students will, eventually, enroll in ALC courses, the variable credit option will allow students to work through subjects at their own pace.

The Alternative Learning Center is both separate from and an extension of the reading program at Pima Community College.

Through its separateness it can reach more students, provide alternative methods of learning, and offer tutorial help while as an extension of the reading program it possesses the ability to give supplemental or extended work in the various reading skills.

The Reading Component of the ALC is not governed directly by the reading area, but, through a liason, works with the area to achieve the "ideal" total reading program.